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Mississippi Tax Commission
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STATE ABC ENFORCEMENT AGENTS “AXE” MOONSHINE PRODUCTION

Agents of the Mississippi Alcohol Beverage Control seized and destroyed a total of twelve moonshine stills, with a record seven of those in June, during the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2006.

All of these stills were located in the central and northern part of the state, says Chief Mark Hicks, Director of ABC Enforcement. “Finding a still takes more than just luck. The methods used to conceal them from law enforcement are passed down just like the recipes for moonshine.” Moonshiners will sometimes move indoors or stop production during the fall and winter when hunters are in the woods. “During the spring and summer there is vegetation to conceal movement and less hunting and the stills fire back up.” Also, the warm summer months in Mississippi make it extremely hard to operate a still indoors. The cooking process can make a small building warm up to unbearable temperatures.

“Veteran agents know most of the tricks used by moonshiners and are usually pretty hot on their trail” says Hicks. Investigations can be initiated by citizen complaints, informants, and the arrest of persons selling the illegal booze. One way moonshiners get busted is when they pick up raw materials. “When you pull up to the back of the grocery store and ask for 500 pounds of sugar, most people might suspect you’re making whiskey.” Moonshine can still be a public health issue, Hicks warned. Moonshine is made under extremely unsanitary conditions and lead poisoning is possible. A recent still destroyed in Winston County utilized a car radiator as a condenser. In addition to this, the State loses thousands of dollars in liquor taxes for even a small operation over a year’s time. The total tax fraud for the stills destroyed this past fiscal year could have reached \$1.8 million.

Persons arrested for moonshining can face up to three years for a first offense and longer for subsequent convictions. Despite the penalties, people still continue to manufacture “white lightning” in the South. It has deep roots in our culture and basically started the interest in auto racing as moonshine runners would build high performance engines to outrun law enforcement. They would routinely race the cars against each other when they weren’t hauling whiskey. And, like race car drivers, moonshiners don’t seem to be slowing down. Agents have already busted the first still of the new fiscal year when a Yazoo City woman was arrested July 7 for making moonshine. A search of her residence uncovered a small still and over fifty gallons of moonshine and she faces additional charges for the 141 marijuana plants found growing in her backyard.